

Lesson Ten – The Wisdom Voice

“

Be kinder to yourself. And let your kindness flood the world.

– Pema Chödrön

”

CREATIVE ACTIVITY – Freedraw & Freewrite

Lesson Intention:

We’ve been talking a lot about the way our thoughts can affect our emotions. In the previous lesson, we explored a method for questioning the stories we tell ourselves about other people and situations. Hopefully students were able to recognize that their story about others isn’t always correct, and that they can try out new ways of seeing something through a different lens. Students also learned to reframe the self-critical thoughts that could be inaccurate, and in this lesson, we invite students to extend compassion to themselves even when their self-critical thoughts may be accurate or feel true. **In this way, we encourage students to be more forgiving of themselves in moments where they make mistakes or feel they haven’t been living up to their highest potential.** Often when we make a mistake, we speak to ourselves in a way that can be harsh and critical. It is important to note that these unkind voices do not originate within us but are learned or absorbed from outside influences over time – culture, social media, peers, and even trusted adults in a child’s life can sometimes contribute to these critical thoughts. Young people must learn to strengthen their own supportive and unconditionally loving inner voice, even if it wasn’t modeled for them. We are calling this kinder voice the “wisdom voice” and invite students to freewrite or freedraw from the perspective of this more loving and forgiving voice. This lesson supports students in turning up the volume on this kind inner voice, and turning down the volume on the critical, negative one.

Learning Goals:

- Distinguish between kind, loving thoughts and critical, negative thoughts.
- Develop self-compassion by cultivating a more loving, wise “inner voice.”

Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Videos \(2\) – Dr. Robin Berman, Preston Pollard](#)
- [Additional Videos \(5\)](#)
- Lesson Plan (this document)
- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)

In Preparation for Lesson:

*Prior to teaching this lesson, **watch the expert and guest artist videos** and create your example free write and free draw that you plan to share with your students.*

Have paper and pens, pencils, markers, crayons, and paint if available.

Featured Videos:

1. Dr. Robin Berman describes the importance of self-compassion, especially when we've made a mistake and feel shame or embarrassment.
2. Preston Pollard explains that he learned to think affirming thoughts as he pursued his dream of becoming a professional skateboarder. He interviews Danai Gurira, an actress from the movie *Avengers*, and she shares that it is crucial not to look to others for our own feeling of self-acceptance.

Additional Videos:

1. Roberto describes a mistake that he made in accidentally hurting a friend's feelings, and the way he used the opportunity to learn respect for his friend's boundaries and also how to be compassionate with himself.
2. Helen describes her process of finding self compassion when she ruminates over mistakes that she has made.
3. College student Tim talks about making a mistake during a swim competition, which led him to doubt himself, and he shares how he handles moments when he is hard on himself, whether it is with athletic or academic challenges.
4. Nalan explains that he tries to approach his mistakes with self-compassion and empathetic self-talk.
5. Patrick describes the way he learned how to feel compassion for himself when he made a mistake and didn't prepare for a final exam.

Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 10 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself and meaningful for your students.

Launching the Lesson:

** Slide 2*

Connect today's lesson with the previous one by explaining that students practiced offering compassion to another person, and now they will be extending that compassion to themselves. Introduce the purpose of today's lesson – to turn up the volume on the inner voice that is kind and loving and turn down the volume on the voice that is critical and judgmental.

Example of What You Could Say:

"We've been talking a lot about the way our thoughts can affect our emotions. And more recently, we have questioned the way our thoughts impact our perspectives and interaction with other people. In the previous lesson, we focused on seeing a situation in a new way which allows us to feel compassion for another person. In today's lesson, we are going to explore the way we can extend that compassion to ourselves.

I want to ask a question, and no one needs to answer out loud. Does anyone beat themselves up when they make a mistake? Maybe you get a low score on a test or make a mistake with a friend that causes you to think self-critical thoughts. I want to share an example from my life. (Share an example of a time when you were critical of yourself because you made a mistake).

Why do we do this? Where do these critical thoughts come from? It is important to note that these critical voices do not originate within us. We are not born with them. We can absorb them from outside influences over time – culture, social media, peers, and even family members or trusted adults. You have the ability to develop this voice into a kinder, more loving voice.

Remember, we already learned one way to reframe self-critical thoughts and that was by asking ourselves if our thoughts are accurate and revising them so that they are more accurate. We wrote a found poem to help ourselves practice this reframe. Today, we are thinking about these self-critical thoughts in a different way. This time, even if the self-critical thought is true or really feels true, we are still going to practice extending ourselves compassion. Everyone makes mistakes. There are times in our lives when we feel like we are not living up to our full potential, but we still deserve kindness, especially from ourselves. Also, making better choices is actually easier when we offer ourselves compassion."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Introducing Creative Activity Part 1:

**Slide 2*

Students choose one aspect of their lives where they have been beating themselves up and thinking self-critical thoughts. Students are invited to freedraw or freewrite these thoughts or the emotions that arise when these thoughts come up. Students spend a few minutes writing words or drawing images that represent their self-critical thoughts.

Example of What You Could Say:

“I can imagine that your own self-critical thoughts have come to mind. These self-critical thoughts might be negative labels that you use to describe yourself, or they might be thoughts that are connected to a specific mistake that you made. We are going to take a few minutes to freewrite or freedraw as you think about this. You may choose to write critical words that come to mind or draw images that represent these harsh thoughts you have about yourself. This is not something you will need to share, so try to be as honest with yourself as you can. I will let you know when it’s time to put down the pen/pencil.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Example of What You Could Say:

“Thank you for being vulnerable in this freewrite/freedraw. It might seem like this is a strange place for us to stop, but we are actually only halfway through this creative activity. We will come back to this writing/drawing in just a few minutes. It is so important to learn how to approach these critical thoughts with self-compassion.

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Expert Video:

An expert in mental health explains that it is important to offer ourselves compassion especially when we make a mistake and feel tempted to think harsh self-critical thoughts. The expert draws on personal experience to illustrate specific methods for being kinder to ourselves in these challenging moments.

Introducing the Guest Artist Video:

Introduce a guest artist who shares the way he has tried to speak more kindly to himself even when he makes mistakes.

Example of What You Could Say:

“We listened to an expert share how we can be kinder to ourselves, even when we make mistakes, and now we are going to watch someone who has learned how to put this lesson into practice.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Guest Artist Video:

Guest artist explains the way he learned how to overcome negative critical voices and pursue his dream.

Introducing Creative Activity Part 2:

**Slide 4*

After the conclusion of the guest artist video, students will flip over their paper and do this activity again. This time, students will freewrite or freedraw about the same thought from this new “wise voice.”

Example of What You Could Say:

“Now, we are all going to flip over our papers and do the same activity again. This time, however, we are going to write words and draw images that come to mind from the perspective of the “loving, wise voice.” Like we saw in the video, think of how you would speak to a close friend, or how a beloved person in your life may speak to you. Address the thought or thoughts that you described in your initial writing or drawing in this new, more self-compassionate way. Even if your critical thought feels very strong and even if you feel there is some truth to it, it is still important to offer yourself self-compassion.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Lesson Closure:

Facilitate a discussion to support students in reflecting on the process of this creative activity – turning negative critical words and images into more self-compassionate ones. Students are encouraged to reflect on whether or not it was challenging to be kind to themselves and are invited to share.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Before I ask if anyone wants to share, I am wondering how challenging this creative activity was for you? How easy or difficult was it to think of a kind and supportive way to view yourself? We may have to retrain our brains a little in order to get better at this. By a raise of your hand, who feels they are kinder to their friends than they are to themselves? Sometimes we are so hard on ourselves, but are able to give the people we love more compassion than we give ourselves. When we focused this kinder voice on ourselves, how did it feel?”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Supplemental Information:

If you or your students would like to learn more about the ideas in this lesson, additional resources and third party links are included below.

1. Dr. Krista Neff has several free meditations to support self-compassion that teachers can stream from [her website](#) if they feel it would deepen the ideas from this lesson for the class. Teachers can access these meditations from the link on her website
2. Headspace provides several video clips on YouTube that provide additional instruction about self-compassion. Another clip from Headspace that students might find helpful is: [Finding Empathy for Yourself and Others](#).